

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T RABAT 1021

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MO, JO

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN F-5A'S TO MOROCCO

REF: AMMAN 963

1. PARA 3 REFTTEL CONFIRMS OUR GROWING SUSPICION THAT PROPOSED F-5A TRANSFER CONSTITUTES EVOLVING MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GOJ AND GOM AND A POTENTIAL CAN OF WORMS FOR ALL OF US. FROM BEGINNING, WE HAVE BEEN RATHER ASTONISHED AT REPORTS THAT MOROCCANS, WHO HAVE BEEN ENGAGING IN MIDDLE EAST BARGAINING FOR A LONG TIME, WOULD BE WILLING TO PAY UPWARDS OF \$3 MILLION (COST OF ONE F-5E), A YEAR AND A HALF FROM NOW, IN ORDER TO OBTAIN IN VERY NEAR FUTURE AN ITEM OF EQUIPMENT (F-5A) WHOSE CURRENT RESALE VALUE IS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF \$200 THOUSAND. UNLESS SOME MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE FORMULA IS FOUND SOON, WE PREDICT THAT THIS PRICE DIFFERENTIAL MAY STRAIN BONDS OF ARAB BROTHERHOOD WELL BEYOND BREAKING POINT, AND PERHAPS EVEN LEAD TO A SPATE OF RECRIMINATIONS IN WHICH BOTH ARAB PARTNERS TO THE PUTATIVE DEAL WOULD FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO TRANSFER AS MUCH BLAME AS POSSIBLE TO THE USG.

2. WHERE DOES U.S. INTEREST LIE IN THIS MATTER? IT SEEMS TO US IT LIES IN DISCREETLY GUIDING BOTH JORDANIANS AND
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MOROCCANS TOWARDS WORKING OUT AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH GETS

THE F-5A'S HERE SOON ON TERMS THAT SUIT JORDANIAN, MOROCCAN, AND PARTICULARLY OUR OWN LONG-TERM INTERESTS.

3. RECOMMENDATION: THAT THIS EMBASSY AND EMBASSY AMMAN BE AUTHORIZED OFFICIALLY TO PROPOSE TO GOM AND GOJ THAT INSTEAD OF OUTRIGHT TRANSFER OF F-5A'S, THE TWO GOVERNMENTS CONSIDER ARRANGEMENT FOR LOAN OF THESE AIRCRAFT ON SUCH TERMS AND FOR SUCH PERIOD AS THEY MIGHT AGREE ON, AT THE END OF WHICH PERIOD THE AIRCRAFT WOULD PRESUMABLY BE RETURNED TO JORDAN. OUR REASONING IS AS FOLLOWS:

A. THIS WOULD OVERTAKE QUESTION OF MOROCCAN REPLACEMENT OF F-5A'S RECEIVED FROM JORDAN BY F-5E'S IT PURCHASES, WITH ATTENDANT INVIDIOUS PRICE COMPARISONS. KING HUSSEIN WOULD LOSE CHANCE FOR A BARGAIN BASEMENT UPGRADE OF HIS AIR FORCE, BUT THIS MIGHT BE MORE THAN COMPENSATED IN HIS MIND BY REDUCTION OF THE RESISTANCE TO THE TRANSFER DEAL FROM HIS OWN MILITARY CITED IN REFTEL. (CONCEIVABLY GOM, WHICH AS NOTED BELOW IS SHORT OF QUALIFIED F-5A PILOTS, MIGHT BE HAPPY TO ACCEPT LOAN OF A FEW JORDANIAN PILOTS ALONG WITH THE PLANES; WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE BUT IT SEEMS FROM REFTELS THAT THIS MIGHT ALSO GO DOWN WELL WITH JORDANIAN MILITARY).

B. FROM PUBLIC POINT OF VIEW, LOAN WOULD REDUCE APPARENT ROLE OF USG IN WHOLE DEAL. PRIMARY FACT FOR OUTSIDERS, (HOPEFULLY EVEN INCLUDING ALGERIANS), WOULD BE FREINDLY GESTURE BY ANOTHER ARAB MONARCH TO HELP KING HASSAN; PROVENANCE OF ITEMS IN QUESTION WOULD BE A SOMEWHAT LESS OBVIOUS CONCERN.

C. INTERNALLY, IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT USG COULD AGREE TO LOAN MORE QUICKLY AND QUIETLY THAN WOULD BE CASE FOR OUTRIGHT TRANSFER OF TITLE. FURTHERMORE, THIS WOULD BE A ONE-SHOT DEAL WITHOUT LINGERING IMPLICATIONS FOR POSSIBLE U.S. INVOLVEMENT, E.G. OVER QUESTION OF WHO PAYS U.S. RESIDUAL RIGHTS ON JORDAN-SUPPLIED F-5A'S, AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT, INCLUDING VARIOUS KINDS OF PAYMENTS, ON THE F-5E SALE LATER ON.

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D. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, IT LOOKS FROM HERE LIKE A CLEANER DEAL AS FAR AS CONGRESS IS CONCERNED, LESS LIKELY TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD AS A BACKDOOR EFFORT TO UPGRADE JORDANIAN AIR FORCE OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

4. REGARDING SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED AT END OF PARA 7
REFTEL
NAMUSLO CHIEF OFFERS FOLLOWING PRELIMINARY

OPINIONS:

A. RMAF IS VERY SHORT OF QUALIFIED F-5A PILOTS.
ESTIMATE ONLY 13 AVAILABLE FOR COMBAT MISSIONS AT
PRESENT. ADDITIONAL UNKNOWN NUMBER OF F-5A PILOTS COULD
BE CROSS-TRAINABLE IN MONTHS, PERHAPS WEEKS.

B. SPARE PARTS FOR EXISTING INVENTORY OF F-5A'S IS
ALREADY A MASSIVE PROBLEM FOR RMAF, WHICH HAS BEEN
REDUCED TO CANNIBALIZING IN SOME CASES. GOM IS URGENTLY
NEGOTIATING SUPPLY SUPPORT ARRANGEMENT WHICH SHOULD LEAD
TO ALLEVIATION OF THIS PROBLEM IN MATTER OF WEEKS.

C. GROUND EQUIPMENT (AGE) WOULD NOT BE A SIGNIFICANT
PROBLEM.

D. AVIATION MUNITIONS ALSO NOT A MAJOR PROBLEM. (LOA
NOW BEING PROCESSED FOR ADDITIONAL MUNITIONS. MOROCCANS
BELIEVED TO HAVE ADEQUATE INVENTORY NOW, AND WHILE
MUCH OF IT IS OF FRENCH ORIGIN, MUCH OF LATTER IS
COMPATIBLE.)

5. URGE QUICKEST POSSIBLE CONSIDERATION OF THIS
PROPOSAL, AS TIME APPEARS OF THE ESSENCE.
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